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10 November 67

Memo To: Chief and Vice Chief OSA
(Thru Director of Personnel)

Subject: Review and Appraisal of Recruit-Pilot Evaluation
and Selection Procedures.

A. Background Information

1. The history and experience factor in OSA's evaluation and selection procedures dates back to 1954, evolving at that time from an on-going research program within the USAF. During the period 1954-1960 a formalized procedure was established in which idealist recruit-pilots were subjected to an aeromedical examination and evaluation exercise which included a psychological assessment in the form of an adaptability rating for "special project flying" accomplished by the Flight Surgeon.

2. The formalized psychologic "assessment and evaluation" procedures were first applied to then currently assigned idealist pilots through the '60-'61 time period, these being instituted at the time the Idealist program was reactivated in late 1960. Basically these psychological procedures were not instituted on the Idealist pilots for the purpose of selection nor out of the 'new' program, but rather as a means to provide individual pilot personality data upon which could be based a constructive RTI program to be instituted at an early follow-on date.

3. At the completion of 1962, 10 of the original Idealist pilots had been reassigned back to the Air Force leaving 8 operationally assigned with one additional pilot joining Hq OSA as a permanent employee in 1963. Since that period, 3 additional recruit-pilots have gone through the combined aeromed-psychological evaluation and selection procedures and subsequently assigned as contract pilots.

B. Current Assessment and Selection Activities

1. From this background a "formalized" aircrew evaluation and selection procedure evolved through which all Oxcart (and Idealist) volunteers have subsequently been processed. The principal items in this procedure are herewith briefly listed:

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a. Screening of potential recruits by ops and aeromedical personnel

b. Aeromedical examination and Hq OSA evaluation at AFSAM, Brooks AFB, Texas.

c. Psychological assessment, evaluation and qualification, Medical Dept., Washington, D.C.

d. Isolation testing, [REDACTED]
NOTE: This experimental test, partially supported by ORD has shown considerable promise, but because of the time required (1 day) for the test, it has been discontinued.

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e. Final summation of all material and formal qualification procedures accomplished by the Medical Dept. and OSA personnel.

f. Final security checks and other administrative actions leading to final contract signing.

2. Attention, at this point, is called to the fact that there is not listed above a psychiatric examination as an integral part of the formal evaluation procedures. This lack of an important item contained within the total procedures is, or rather, has been justified in the past on the following bases: i.e.,

a. Formerly, as a part of [REDACTED] experimental isolation procedures, he performed a 'modified' psychiatric examination and evaluation on each volunteer prior to and following the isolation room exposure.

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b. In the majority of the cases a cursory psychiatric assessment was made by the staff psychiatrist at S.A.M., Brooks AFB, Texas. This had some limitations, since the psychiatrist was not cleared for any of OSA operational activities.

c. As a semi-acceptable substitute two personal interviews were conducted on each volunteer by experienced Air Force Flight Surgeons to determine his "adaptability index" for special projects assignment.

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d. Since most of the candidates have been checked off according to the AF personnel reliability criteria, it has been assumed that they were free of any gross or latent psychotic impairment. Having had some personal experience with this particular AF Program, I would hesitate to fully support this assumption. In the same vein, I would seriously doubt that any of the above-mentioned procedures truly represented a satisfactory substitute for a thorough psychiatric assessment performed by a fully-qualified, security-cleared psychiatrist.

3. It should also be noted from the above listing that no formal assessment and report is made on the familial and socio-environmental factors in each applicants background. These items are sometimes partially covered after the candidate has been accepted and is already working in his special projects assignment. Although all evaluating personnel are fully cognizant of the importance in obtaining and accurate pre-recruitment analysis of the candidate's past family and socio-economic record, such has not been routinely made primarily for reasons of security. The rules of conduct laid down for compliance by the authorities precludes any local or background investigation being carried out on the candidates prior to official acceptance.

4. In general, despite the two minor deficiencies noted above, the results of the AE & S procedures have been considered excellent, at least to the extent they can be evaluated on the basis of subsequent job performance. For the most part there has been general agreement between the various members of the selection team regarding dis-qualifications and there has occurred no single case of major disagreement re a single candidate's suitability during the entire period of AE & S activities.

At the same time, the personnel responsible for these activities have been constantly reviewing their methods and whatever operational data has been available for use in correlative and validative studies, toward the end of making timely, constructive improvements in the over-all procedures. To some extent the implementation of these plans for improving the net effectiveness of these exercises has been hampered by the "built-in" vagaries which characterize each operational program, particularly as regards its scope and longevity. However, since it now appears that the Idealist program by virtue of several operational factors will be continued on a

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somewhat indefinite basis, a current attempt is underway to review thoroughly our past methods and procedures with a view toward instituting constructive modifications yielding significant improvements in over-all reliability of the system.

C. Critical Analysis of past weaknesses and problem-areas in AE & S procedures.

1. Attention has been called above to deficiencies which have been known to exist in the past configurations, the correction of which under current restrictions is largely outside the province of the AE & S team. In addition, however, there have been other weaknesses observed in the proceedings which may lend themselves to corrective modification by and within the resources of the parent groups involved. In order to provide a logical basis for discussion, these so-called failures in the past AE & S efforts, (accepting for the sake of completeness all of the mistakes and problems encountered regardless of etiology) are listed herewith:

c. The problem of dealing satisfactorily with an accepted and assigned pilot who demonstrates questionable emotional stability while undergoing various prescribed training programs.

d. Personal and family problems arising amongst the operational personnel which are purposely contained within the unit until reaching proportions requiring Hq corrective action, which in many cases must, of necessity, comprise an incompletely satisfactory resolution of the problem; i.e., too little and too late.

e. Conflicts arising within the OSA company organizational structure regarding the medical or psychological fitness of a given candidate or assigned pilot arising in some cases from hazy lines of authority and responsibility. Although many older and experienced pilots are convinced that they are experts in the field of personality assessment, as a general rule such duties and responsibilities should be discharged by the trained professionals.

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2. A precise and factual delineation of the causative factors underlying the above-listed deficiencies cannot be made primarily because; firstly, we are not dealing with a precise, quantitative situation which lends itself readily to objective analysis and secondly we are dealing with political, economic and personal factors which exert somewhat random and unpredictable dynamic pressures upon any system set up to accurately evaluate and predict it.

Despite these obvious shortcomings intrinsic to any critical analysis there are some factors which appear repetitively and consistently through the various matrices of these problem areas. These can be listed as follows:

a. Basically, and of primary importance as a factor underlying all weaknesses in the AE & S procedures, is the mistaken concept that one can successfully evaluate, select and train one segment of a total team committed to a vital mission without similar care being applied to all other segments of the personnel involved. What this means is simply that many of the weaknesses and failures experienced in our pilot evaluation, selection and training procedures may well be due to other random factors within the operational, organizational and environmental framework which are largely unknown and therefore impossible to logically and meaningfully integrate into the assessment patterns.

b. Of almost equal importance to this primary false concept is the secondary belief that once an individual is found qualified for a given operational assignment, then his continued effective participation in the project is assured, assuming no catastrophic event supervenes. This point hardly needs further laboring since practically everyone realizes that in any operational-environmental system, the secret of continued success and productivity rests on a well-concieved and implemented program designed to provide optimal preventive maintenance to both equipment and personnel.

This concept related to the subject at hand points to the requirement for continued surveillance and assessment of all factors operating within the occupational familial, social and economical envelope which surrounds the individual during his total assignment period. In effect, this means that at least some accepted representation from the AE & S team must be maintained fairly constantly at the operational and living areas.

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c. The obvious lack of any means by and through which a meaningful correlation can be made between AE & S standards and total performance of the previously qualified pilot shares practically equal importance with the two items "a" and "b" discussed above, although when superficially considered, this defect in the total organization of effort to maintain optimal personnel effectiveness would appear easily remedied, in actual practice it presents a number of major obstacles; i.e.

i. The numbers of personnel and missions involved is small by comparison to other operations and therefore difficult to deal with statistically.

ii. The extremely close inter-personal relationships existing within each operational unit does not allow for any ranking of pilots by individual accomplishments.

iii. New security provisions which have been instituted over the past 2 years, (since both the "I" and "O" programs have become operational) do not allow any observation by or participation in, the pre and post mission briefings and conferences by any representatives of the AE & S team including the aeromedical consultant to OSA. This is not a statement of criticism but rather one to clarify all rules of the game which must be understood and accepted by those concerned with the AE & S activities. It is not more nor less a handicap than the other imponderables in the system which have already been discussed.

3. Brief mention should be made on the problem of limitation of resources specifically as it pertains to the restriction of OSA activities both in the R & D and operational areas. What may not be fully appreciated by those not intimately associated with OSA, is the fact that there has been imposed a rather drastic curtailment of resources available to the office which of necessity has affected all of its ancillary and support activities including those of aeromedical life support and similar nature.

The point here is simply one of "cost effectiveness" which must be considered very seriously whenever additional funds and/or personnel are requested in support of an expanded program. If a broader program is to be recommended to the Director, OSA in the over-all field of selection and maintenance

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of personnel, then every attempt must be made to justify such on a basis of some identifiable improvements to be realized in net operational productivity.

D. Suggested items for consideration as potential useful modifications and improvements to the current AE & S procedures, with some overlap into the personnel maintenance area of endeavor.

1. The preparation of a document which, when reviewed and approved by the responsible Directors, would represent the official Standard Operating Procedure for the activities of the AE & S Team. This to include the organization of the team with specific assignment of responsibilities.

2. Establish a Central Crew Records Depository with an approved format whereby all pertinent data would be recorded and available for perusal and analysis by responsible personnel.

3. Investigate and determine the maximum amount of pertinent information on the applicants' personal, familial, social and occupational background which can be obtained and recorded in usable form from Air Force or other government agency sources.

4. Determine that type and amount of unit and individual environmental and operational data which could be recorded within security constraints and which would be considered of value to AE & S analytical and correlative studies.

5. Review and consider the various possibilities available (within funding limitations) by which a closer and continuous liaison could be maintained between the AE & S team and the assigned pilot, his family and his activities throughout the period of his assignment in a special project.

6. As a corollary to (5) above, formulate a proposed plan for consideration by the Director, OSA which would represent the most comprehensive and logical program of personnel preventive maintenance which the state of the art currently affords.

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